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**LETTERS**  
WRITTEN BY  
*A French* **GENTLEMAN,**  
GIVING  
A Faithful and Particular Account of the  
Transactions at the Court of  
**FRANCE,**  
RELATING  
To the Publick Interest of  
**EUROPE:**  
WITH  
Historical and Political Reflexions on the  
Ancient and Present State of that  
**KINGDOM.**

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Communicated by  
Monsieur *V A S S O R.*

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L O N D O N,  
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# THE FIRST LETTER.

S I R,

**Y**OU are pleas'd to desire an Account of my Thoughts concerning that *General Poll-Tax*, with which we are threatned. And to invite me to make you the Confident of my Sentiments on this occasion; you have said enough to convince me, that I was not mistaken in believing that you agree with me, in esteeming it our Honour to be of the number of those *True Frenchmen*, who continue still to be Lovers of their Country. For so long as there shall be Men of Sense and Courage in *France*, she will still retain some Foot-steps of her Dying liberty, and we shall still preserve the Memory of our former Priviledges. But you must give me leave to ask, whether you have seriously consider'd, how dangerously you expose both me and your self, by engaging in a Correspondence concerning so nice a Subject as that of the Government. We are scarce allow'd the liberty to think: And what Persecutions may we not fear, if it should be discover'd that we have taken the freedom to speak our thoughts? nevertheless if you have the Courage to neglect this

B Confide-



Consideration, I am resolv'd not to give you occasion to accuse me of Cowardice; only let us endeavour to manage our Correspondence with so much caution, as to hinder our Letters from being intercepted.

You cannot be perswaded to believe, that the King's Ministers will ever advise him to impose that *General Poll-Tax* which is so much talk'd of. For this, you say, would be no less than to deprive us of the only shadow of Liberty, that we are suffer'd still to enjoy, What? Shall the Princes of the Blood, the Nobility? the Officers of the Crown, and all the Gentry be Tax'd like Peasants? Shall the Clergy be Rob'd of its noblest Privilege? Shall the Inhabitants of Paris, and of all the chief Cities in the Kingdom, lose that alone of all their Rights, which they have been able to preserve hitherto? No: the Consequences of such an Attempt are too visible, and would be too fatal in the present posture of our Affairs. At least, you add, it is not credible, that the King will adventure to Publish a Declaration that may open the dull-st Eyes, and even cause a general Insurrection, without calling an extraordinary meeting of the Princes of the Blood, the Peers of France, and the Officers of the Crown; and without going himself to the Parliament, to acquaint them with the Reasons, that oblige him to impose a Tax upon his Subjects, that will compleat the subversion of this State, and to hear the Remonstrances which that Wise and Illustrious Assembly would not fail to offer to him, on such an important occasion. This is a step, you conclude, so contrary to the Maxims, that the King has always follow'd, since he began to Govern by himself; that they would rather endeavour to find out a Thousand other ways to defray the Charge of the War, than reduce him to an extremity, that would vex him more than all the disappointments that he has met with from the obstinacy of the Confederates, to refuse the Dayly Proposals of Peace, both in General and Particular, which he causes to be offer'd to them.



I acknowledge, Sir, that your Reflexions are just and reasonable; and you might have added, that the Estates of the Kingdom ought to have been assembled, and their consent obtain'd. For if it be true what

\* *Philip de Cominees* asserts, that no King or <sup>\* l. 5. c. 18.</sup> Potentate in the World has a right to exact a Penny from his Subjects, without the Advice and Consent of those that are to be Taxed, unless in his own Demeasns; and that all Impositions that are levied without these Conditions, are the effects of *Tyrannical Violence*: If it be true, that *M. Colbert* and the rest of that Tribe, who, to testify their Zeal and Affection to their Master, have perswaded him that he has a right to all our Estates, have made him odious and terrible to his Neighbours, who would chuse any Misery rather than that of being his Subjects: If it be true that there was a time when the King's of *France* dar'd not to say, *I take what I will, and am Master of all*. If all this, I say, be true, may we not hope that the King, who would appear to have so great a Sense of Religion, will assemble the Estates of the Kingdom, to consult with them whether it be necessary to continue the War, and whether it be more conducive to the publick Good, to harass all his own Subjects, than to do Justice to the Confederates.

In the mean time, Sir, I can assure you, that neither your Reflexions, nor mine, will hinder the King's Council from imposing the *Poll-Tax*; and I'm even perswaded, that there will not be the least motion made to call a Meeting of the Princes of the Blood, the Peers of *France*, and Officers of the Crown; much less will they desire the King to give himself the trouble to go in Person to the Parliament; and least of all, will they have the Confidence to lay before him the necessity of summoning a Convention of the Estates. Not long ago,

a certain Lady, who shews a wonderful concern for the Preservation of the King's Health, grumbled at all those who represented to the King the miserable effects of the Famine in *Paris*, and other Places: She ask'd them whether they came with a design against the King's Life. And who then could be so hardhearted as to desire the King to expose himself to the danger of hearing the Remonstrances of his Subjects, concerning the deplorable condition to which the Kingdom is reduc'd? This would certainly afflict the good Prince more sensibly, and sooner break his tender Heart, than all those stories of his Poor languishing People that wander about the Streets of *Paris*, and are forc'd to rake the Dung-hills for Dead-Horses, wherewith to fill their raging Stomachs.

We study to imitate the Example of those  
*\* Annal. 1. & 3. Romans*, mentioned by *\* Tacitus*, Princes, Dukes and Peers, Officers of the Crown, Bishops, Gentlemen, Magistrates of the Sovereign Courts, and all of us together, are posting to Slavery, and that with so much eagerness and haste, as if we strove to out-run one another. We think to please the King; but I durst swear that he and his Minister do in their Hearts hate and despise us, and that they insult over us, as *Tiberius* over his base and flattering Senate, *O homines ad servitutem paratos!* There is not one amongst us, that ever saw the Days of Liberty. The form and mildness of our Ancient Government is lost; yet all our Care is, to flatter our Prince and to obey him blindly. We laugh at the folly of the *Danes*, who have divested themselves of all their Liberties, and lodg'd an Arbitrary Power in their King's: We, I say, who are more ridiculously mad than they, who, tho' we have not given the King any one Authentick Title to our Privileges



ledges, do yet tamely stretch forth our Necks to receive a heavier Yoke than that of the *Danes*, or rather a Yoke that is more cruel and insupportable, than that which the *Grand Signior* and *Great Mogul*, impose upon their Slaves.

At last the fatal time is come, in vain we expect to see better Days: We have put on a Chain, that will grow Dayly more insupportable. We are not so much as suffer'd to speak of Liberty, and they would hinder us too from seeing it enjoy'd by others. A great Man who Commanded the *Roman* Armies in *Britain* thought it necessary to resolve on the Conquest of *Ireland*, \* least the

*Velut e conspectu libertas tolleretur. Tacit. in Agric.*

Ancient *Britons*, by seeing a free Nation so near them, should be tempted to recover their own lost Liberty. Is it not probable that our Court is acted by the same Principles? Are not these the Maxims that oblige her to endeavour with so much obstinacy, to make the *English* and *Dutch* our Companions in Slavery? She cannot bear the Neighbourhood of a Nation, that has always asserted its Priviledges with a great deal of Vigor; nor is she less prejudic'd against another, that had the Courage to shake of its Fetters. Who knows whether the *French* may not at last fall in love with the Constitution of the *English* Government, and settle one like to it at Home; which after all, will be only our own Ancient form of Government restor'd. And

\* l. 5. c. 18.

\* *Philip de Cormines* assures us, with his usual sincerity, that *he knows not a Countrey* in the World, where the Common-wealth is better manag'd, and the Subjects suffer less violence, then in *England*.

I am of the same opinion with you, that the King wishes with all his Heart, he could continue the War without imposing a *General Poll-Tax*; that Method is certainly



certainly too odious to be chosen without necessity, and how hard and pitiless soever we have found our Masters to be, I believe they would not willingly encrease the Murmurings and Dissatisfaction of the People. But what can we expect from Men that know not what course to take? We have seen enough, more than once to persuade us, that our Ministers of State do not now begin to be gravel'd. The Intelligencers have no more Memoirs to present. On what then would you have them lay a new Imposition? Would you have them Tax the Air that we breath? For that is the only Element now remains free to us.

Give me leave, Sir, to put you in mind of an Observation, which you that have past so often through the Gates of *Paris* have doubtless made as well as I. *The happiness of the City under Lewis the Great.* You know that many of them bear this magnificent Inscription, \* *Sub Ludovico Magno Felicitas Urbis.* But if you cast your Eye on the adjacent buildings, you shall find a vast number of Toll-gatherers Houses, on which are written, in no less conspicuous Characters, the Names of Offices and Courts, for such a prodigious variety of Imposts. If you can advance further into the City, you shall scarce find a Street without an Office or Court of Audit, for some ridiculous and hitherto unheard of Taxation. Such is the happiness of the *French* Nation, under the long Reign of the great Prince, for whom they have erected so many Statues. We have not seen a Week these Six Years, that has not produc'd at least One or Two new Edicts or Declarations; and at length the *Invention* of the subtlest *Finances* is drain'd, as well as our Purses. 'Tis not so easy now, as 'twas formerly, to find out Methods to furnish the King with Ten, Twenty, or Thirty Millions, and a *General Poll Tax* is the last refuge.

I know not whether the very noise of so surprising a Project has not already alarm'd some of the *Confederates*? 'Tis but natural for those who are not well acquainted with the deplorable condition of a Countrey, that was once so Rich and Flourishing, to imagine, that this new Imposition will make the King Master of a sufficient Fund to carry on the War for several Years. And I do not at all doubt, but that the Court flatters it self with the hopes of terrifying its Enemies, by the intended *Declaration*. Its Emissaries in *Holland* and *England* will not fail to give out, that *France* is inexhaustible, and that we are as able and willing to part with our Money, as the *English* and *Dutch* are to part with theirs. I am confirm'd in this Opinion, by what I heard yesterday from one of my Friends, who inform'd me, that the subject of those Verses that are to be made in praise of the King, to obtain the Prize that is propos'd to be given by the *French Academy* on *St. Lewis's Day*, is appointed to be this Proposition, *That the King is no less terrible to his Enemies by the love of his Subjects, than by the force of his Arms*. For I'm satisfi'd, that this cannot be done without a design.

But who will be impos'd upon by so obvious a trick, or regard so base and ridiculous a piece of flattery? Are the *Confederates* ignorant of the general Dissatisfaction of the Nobility, Gentry, and Third Estate, which is so apparent in *Paris*, and all the Towns in the Kingdom? Have they not heard in *England* and *Holland*, that the King's Revenues are considerably diminished? And tho' the Truth of this were not so publickly known, it would not require a very great stock of Sagacity to Divine, that they, who have not Money to buy Bread, cannot be supposed to consume much Wine, either at Home or at the Tavern; and that consequently the

Entries



Entries at *Paris*, and in the other Cities of *France*, do not now amount to such great Sums as they did heretofore. The Peasants are generally so miserable, that they are not able to fetch Salt from the Garner, from whence 'tis likewise plain, that the King's Coffers are not so well fill'd by the *Gabels* as formerly they were. The Fields lie until'd, and are almost turn'd to Desarts: An infinite number of People are Dead of Hunger, Misery, and other Epidemical Distempers. Those Towns which we have seen in a flourishing condition and well Peopled, are ruin'd and abandon'd by their Inhabitants, and most of the Labourers and Tradesmen are reduc'd to Beggery: wonder not then, that the King is forc'd to Tax the Princes, Gentry, Clergy, and Inhabitants of free Cities, since there are so few others left to be Tax'd.

But you will perhaps tell me, that we do not now begin to be Tax'd; for, you'll say, we contributed to pay all those Taxations, which were exacted from our Farmers and Labourers; since we might have let out our Lands to better Advantage, if our Tenants had not been Tax'd: And consequently the Privileges of the Nobility, Clergy, and Inhabitants of *Paris*, and other Cities, are no more than imaginary Titles. What then, Sir? Did not the King become the most glorious and powerful Monarch in the World, by imposing only the \* *Real Taxation* upon us? And shall we grudge to Pay a *Personal Tax* for the Preservation of all that Glory and Power, which he has so justly acquir'd at the Charge of his good Subjects. Alas! Sir, shall we suffer all these fine Inscriptions to be defac'd, with which the *Place de Victoire*, and the Gates of *St. Denis* and *St. Martin* are adorn'd.

\* That which was paid by the Farmers.

But



But this is not a time for Mirth ; If our King's assume a Power to impose a *General Poll-Tax* as often as the fancy takes them, you may assure your self, that it will take them oftner then we desire. This is the most certain mark of our Servitude ; the *French Nation* has lost both its Honour and its Liberty ; neither can I think of any Remedy for so cruel a Disaster. Let us try the Virtue of those Maxims that we find in our dear

*Tacitus*. \* " A Wise Man, says

" he, may admire the Happiness

" of former Ages ; but he

" bears present Misfortunes

" with Patience. † We ought

" to wish for good Princes,

" but must bear with such as

" we have. ¶ The Reign of a

" bad Prince is like a Year of

" Dearth and Famine ; and our

" Miseries in this World are not

" Eternal. For as the next good

" Year makes amends for our former losses ; so a Tyrant is sometimes succeeded by a good Prince. Thus we may comfort our selves with hopes of better times under the *Dauphin* ; these Maxims, I confess are not very proper to satisfy Men in our circumstances ; but they are the best that I am able to suggest to you.

Shall we entreat the King to call a general Meeting of the Estates of the Realm ? But who will undertake to present our Petition to him ? Shall the Princes of the Blood ? There is not one among them that durst offer the least Remonstrance to His Majesty ; shall the Dukes and Peers of *France*, or the Officers of the Crown ? They might expect to be immediatly rewarded with a lodging in the *Bastile* ; and there are too many base com-

C

pliers

\* *Uteriora mirari, presentia  
sequi. Tacit. Histor. l. 4.*

† *Bonos Imperatores volo expectare ; qualescunque tolerare.*  
Idem.

¶ *Ut Sterilitatem & nimios  
Imbres & cetera Natura mala,  
ita Luxum vel Avaritiam  
Dominantium tolerate ; Sed ne-  
que hæc conium, & meliorum  
interventu pensantur.* Idem.

pliers with the Times, who would offer their Service to drag them thither. Shall those of the First Order in the Church? The Court has found out a way to make sure of them; the Clergy has contributed already vast Sums, and 'tis said, that several Millions more will be demanded of them shortly; Should the Parliament of *Paris* deliver our Address, they would instantly be interdicted, and the Heads of that Assembly would be punished as seditious Traytors? should it be presented by the Inhabitants of *Paris*, and the rest of the great Cities, we should see Gibbets erected in every corner of the Streets, and the Troops of the *Household* sent to devour 'em: Our Poor and Ill-paid Officers would barbarously pillage the Houses of those Persons, who could be accus'd of no other Crime, than of endeavouring to preserve that little remainder of Liberty which they seem still to enjoy.

I had the fortune, some Days ago, to be in a Company, where they talk'd variously concerning the late Revolution in *England*. A Man of Sense, who is perfectly well acquainted with the Ancient and Modern History of *France*, demonstrated plainly, that our Government was formerly like to that of *England*, and that the Sovereign Authority was properly lodg'd in the *Meeting of the Estates*. There Laws were made; there the most important Cases were decided, and such Subsidies as were judg'd necessary for the Defence of the Kingdom were granted; the King had no more Power than what was sufficient to enable him to cause the Decrees of those Assemblies to be put in Execution, and to attend diligently to the Security and Preservation of the State. These are obvious Remarks, which every one that reads our Ancient Histories, tho' but with a very moderate degree of Application, cannot fail to observe. Such



Such were, in effect, the inviolable Maxims of the *Gauls*, and of the Northern Nations, from whom both we and the *English* are descended.

\* "Let the People of the East, who  
 "are accusom'd to the Despotic  
 "Government of their Kings, sub-  
 "mit to the *Roman* Yoke, said, a  
 great Man among our *Gauls*, "we will not follow their  
 "Example, We can still remember a time when we  
 "paid no Tribute. † Nature  
 "made the Beasts free, as well  
 "as Men, with this only diffe-  
 "rence, That Men are endued  
 "with Virtue and Courage to preserve their Liber-  
 ty. The *Hollanders* have not yet forgot the Heroical  
 sentiments of their *Country-man*; but we, alas!  
 lose the Memory of 'em Dayly.  
 \* "The Northern Nations never  
 "suffer'd their King's to assume  
 "an Arbitrary and unlimited  
 "Power; † their Princes govern  
 "rather by Perswasion, than  
 "Force: ¶ And even such of  
 "those Nations as were under  
 "the severest Government, did  
 "still enjoy a great deal of Li-  
 "berty.

\* *Servirent Syria, Asiaque,  
 & suctus Regibus Oriens,  
 multos adhuc in Gallia vivere  
 ante tributa genitos. Tacit.  
 Hist. l. 4.*

† *Libertatem Naturâ mutis  
 Animalibus datam; virtu-  
 tem proprium hominum bonum.  
 Idem. ibid.*

\* *Nec Regibus infinita aut li-  
 bera potestas. Tacit. de mo-  
 ribus Germanorum.*

† *Auctoritate suadendi magis  
 quam jubendi potestate. Idem.  
 ibid.*

¶ *Regnansur paulo addictius,  
 quam cetera Germanorum  
 gentes, nondum tamen supra  
 libertatem. Idem. ibid.*

To all these Observations, my Friend added one more, that since we have not like the *Danes*, renounc'd our Liberty, we may lawfully endeavour to shake off the Yoke that is imposed upon us. For there is no just Prescription against the fundamental Laws of a State. But how reasonable soever these Remarks be, they appear so new and so surprizing to certain Persons,

that they imagine it to be no less ridiculous to talk of assembling the Estates at this time of the Day, than it would be to persuade them to resume the Ruff and Bonets that were used in the time of *Francis the First*. These are obsolete Stories, say they, and we do not so much as remember, that ever there were Estates in *France*. 'Tis true, replied one of our Friends angrily, we forgot that we are *French-men*, and we shall forget too e'er long, that we are reasonable Men.

\* *Nec totam servitutem pati possunt, nec totam libertatem*  
Tacit. Hist. lib. 1.

The *Romans*, said one of their own Emperors, \* are no longer capable of enjoying a full and entire Liberty, tho' they were again put in possession of it, nor will they bear too heavy a Yoke; is it possible, that we should be already, more accustom'd to Slavery, than a People that had serv'd such Masters as *Tiberius*, *Caligula*, and *Nero*? I'm perswaded the King will never give such advice to the *Dauphin*, as *Galba* did to him whom he thought to make his Successor. No care will be taken to sweeten our Bondage, we are such tame Slaves, that Policy would be lost upon us.

The Princes of the Blood are by their Birth chief Counsellors of State; their Advice ought to be taken on all occasions that relate to the Interest of the Kingdom, such as the making of War and Peace, entering into Leagues, raising of Subsidies, and the like. It were easy to prove this by our Histories, and by the Edicts of our King's. But now the Face of Affairs is altered; and nothing of moment is imparted to these. They are too happy when His Majesty suffers them to pass some idle and tedious Hours at *Versailles*, or to go to the Camp to be kill'd like private Soldiers. Not only matters of State are not communicated to them,  
but



but they are not suffer'd to be Masters even at home, nor so much as consulted concerning the Marriage of their own Children. 'Tis well known after what manner the Duke of *Chartres* married *Mademoiselle de Blois*. The Prince, to preserve an Office and a Government in his Family, and to secure the Fortunes of his Children, was forc'd to marry them to Bastards, whose Mother's Name would not be permitted to be mentioned in any publick Deed.

The Prince of *Conty* is Master of all those excellent Endowments both natural and acquired, with which a Person of his Quality ought to be adorn'd: But what Treatment does so rare a Merit procure him at the Court? He is left without Command, Office, or Government; while the chief Employments are given to those that are infinitely beneath him. I know some Gentlemen who are oftentimes wont to complain, that the Princes of the Blood are not more tenderly touch'd with a sence of their own Disgrace, and our Miseries. But neither is their Power considerable, nor do we merit their Assistance. The late Prince, inspired with a just Indignation against the *French Nobility*, used to say, *I put the Sword in their Hands, I cry'd out against Tyranny, and they answered me with Musquet-shot.* The Consideration of his Misfortunes has taught our Princes Caution: And if any one among 'em should have the Generosity to declare himself the Protector of the Common Interest, who could assure us that our Countrymen would not still be Fools enough to fight against him?

The Dukes and Peers, and Officers of the Crown, are likewise, by vertue of their Dignity, chief Counsellors of State, and have a Right to go to the Parliament when they please. Ah! vain Shadow of the Glorious Priviledges

Priviledges of the ancient Peers of *France*. No matter of Importance was transacted without their Consent. They remain'd unconcern'd Spectators of the Wars that were begun without their Approbation, leaving the King to pursue his own private Quarrels, and serv'd him only in those Wars which they judg'd necessary for the common good of the Realm. Such is the obedience which the present Princes of *Germany* pay to the Emperor; and you know better than I, that the Government of *France* did very much resemble that of *Germany*, before our King's had remitted to the Crown those great Fiefs, that were dismembred from it, during the Reign of *Hugh Capet*.

When the King acted contrary to the Priviledges of the Nobility, or to the good of the People, they did not fail to oppose him; they appeal'd to the States-General, and enter'd into Leagues among themselves, and with the principal Cities, to prevent the Execution of the unjust attempts of their Prince. *Philip Sirnam'd the Long*, had form'd a design to seize on the fifth part of the Estates of his Subjects, under the pretext of reforming or New-coining the Money. But the Princes

\* *Abridgement of Mezeray.*

and the Prelates, says \* one of our Historians, would not suffer the King's Commissaries to Execute his Orders; they appeal'd to the States General, and enter'd into Confederacies with the Cities, which had so good an effect, that the Imposition could not be Levied. Do you think that these generous Patriots would have suffer'd a King to seize on the fifth part of all the Coin'd Money in the Kingdom twice in less than Four Years, by commanding it Arbitrarily to be new Stamp'd? And when did we renounce our Right of having recourse to those means which our Ancestors might lawfully make use of, for the preservation of their Estates and Liberties? No



No sooner had *Lewis XI.* mounted the Throne, but he began to \* Govern *without a Council, and for the most part also without Justice and Reason.* He fancied himself an able Politician than his Predecessors, and left no means unessay'd to make himself terrible. He chose rather to follow the Dictates of his own unruly Humour, than to observe the Wise Laws of the Nation. He thought he could not make a nobler use of his Authority, than by oppressing his Subjects, and that the best way to display his Grandeur, was by ruining the greatest Families in the Kingdom, and advancing the meanest of the People. This is what some call, says *Mezeray*, to pass the Mon-age of Royalty, and to rule without a Tutor, but they ought rather to say, without Sense or Reason. Thus the King, by endeavouring to assume an Arbitrary or Despotick Power, irritated the Minds of the Princes of the Blood, the Nobility, and all true Lovers of their Country, who resolv'd generously to shake off the Yoke that they were not accusom'd to bear. *Charles Duke of Orleans*, and first Prince of the Blood, undertook to represent their grievances to His Majesty, in the presence of a numerous Assembly of Persons of Quality who were met at the Court. Accordingly he spoke to the King with all the freedom that his Age, Reputation, and Quality Authorised him to use: But these Remonstrances offended His Majesty, and were received with Indignation and Scorn, adds the same \* Historian. The good Duke Died with Grief, two Days after: But not long after the King's Brother, the Count of Charolois Son of the Duke of Burgundy, the Dukes of Bretaign, Calabria, Bourbon, and Alençon, with several other Princes of the Blood, the Duke of Vernours, the Counts of Armagnac, Dunois, S. Pol, the Marechal de Lohear, the Lords of Albret, Bueil,

\* Abridgement of Mezeray.

\* Abridgement of Mezeray.

*Bueil*, and *Chaumont-Amboise*, and almost all the Nobility, and old Officers of the Army enter'd into an Association to oppose the pernicious Designs of the King: And this Confederacy was call'd the *League of the Publick-Good*.

*Lewis* was then reduc'd to so great an extremity, that if the City of *Paris* had joyn'd with the League, they might have easily driven him out of the Kingdom. Our flatterers are wont to call this Confederacy an unlawful Rebellion. But *Philip de Cominees* did not think fit to give it so odious a name; he was better acquainted with the Rights both of the Subjects and Sovereigns of *Europe*. Far from that, he only blames the United Princes for neglecting to secure the Interests of the People, when they made their own

*l. i. c. 2, 3. &c.* Peace with the King. \* *The Publick Good*,  
*Abridgement of* says he, *yielded to private Interest*. † A modern Historian adds, that it was agreed to  
*Mezeray.* nominate *Thirty and Six Persons*, whom they called *Notables*, consisting of an equal number of the Nobility, Clergy, and Lawyers, who should be impowered to consult together, and to fall upon proper Methods to ease the People of their Grievances, and to redress the disorders of the State. This instance gives us a clear view of the ancient Customs and Liberties of *France*, before it was enslav'd by the pernicious Maxims of *Mazarin*, *le Tellier*, *Colbert*, *Louvois*, and the rest of that base and mercenary Gang, who have sacrific'd the Honour and Priviledges of their Country, to their private Interest and Ambition. But we have, at least, the Comfort to see that their Children and Heirs begin to detest such damnable Politicks, since the Families of these subtle Ministers are ruin'd, in pursuance of those very Counsels which were first given by themselves.



I have already said that *Philip de Cominees* was too well acquainted with the Priviledges both of the People and Princes of *Europe*, to condemn the Members of the Confederacy that was set on foot against *Lewis the XIth*, as Rebels against their lawful Sovereign. For it must not be imagin'd, that the Custom of entering into Association against Tyrannical Princes, was peculiar to *France*. It was universally claim'd as their undoubted Right by all those States that were founded by the Northern Nations, on the Ruins of the *Roman* Empire. The Princes, Bishops, and free Cities of *Germany*, have always retain'd, and do to this very Day continue to retain their undoubted Priviledge, to make Leagues against the Emperor, in defence of their Rights and Liberties. The same Custom was also observ'd by the ancient *English*, and even own'd by their King's: For when they agreed on certain Articles with the Peers of the Kingdom, it was concluded on both sides, that the Nobility had a right to maintain their Prerogatives by force of Arms, in case the King should attempt to violate them. And it is no less certain, that the Grandees, Bishops, and principal Cities of *Spain*, have assum'd the same Priviledge, when they judg'd it necessary for the good of their Countrey. It were easy to prove this by many and clear instances; but I shall content my self with putting you in mind of the League which they made under the Reign of *Charles the V*, call'd *la Junta Santa*, to deliver themselves from the Tyranny of the *Flemings*, to whom that Prince had entrusted the Government of his *Spanish* Dominions.

The Grandees of that Kingdom do still maintain their Prerogatives, without suffering them to be violated; and shall we be the only Slaves in *Europe*? Shall our Nobility so fam'd of old for their Bravery, and that

Warlike and undaunted Spirit which distinguished them with so much advantage in the World, or rather shall their degenerated Posterity, instead of attempting to regain their ancient Liberty, tamely suffer themselves to be kill'd, and Dayly offer'd up as ignoble Victims to support that Arbitrary Power that oppresses them? 'Tis true, a Duke and Peer of *France* may enter into the *Louvre* in his Coach, and sit for fashion's sake on the *Flower-de-luces* in the *Grand-chamber*, and has also the pleasure to see a stool presented to his Lady, when she comes to attend the Queen: And are not these mighty Priviledges, or rather the Poor remainders of all that Honour and Authority that adorn'd the prime Dignities of so great a Kingdom.

But perhaps the Parliament of *Paris* are better Judges of the true Interest of the Nation. I do not at all doubt, but that there are some intelligent and well affected Magistrates in that numerous body, who understand perfectly the Rights both of the People and of the Prince, who bewail our Miseries, and desire nothing more ardently, than to be able to contribute somewhat more than bare wishes to regain our ancient Liberties; but they dare not discover their true sentiments. I am confident, you will not think your time ill-employ'd in Reading an Account of that Assembly, for which I am oblig'd to one of my Friends, who is a President. Our Parliament, said he, is now no more than a Company of wrangling Practitioners in Law, who study nothing but Customs, Edicts, and Proceedings of Courts. It was at first instituted to represent the States General of the Kingdom: It was a Body composed of the six chief Peers of *France*, the six Ecclesiastical Peers, the Chancellor, Principal Officers of the Crown, and some other Persons of Note who had a Right to sit in the States-General



General, when the Necessity of Affairs required their Meeting. They maintain'd the Interests of the People against the Usurpations of the Prince, & shared the Sovereign Authority with him, when the States were not assembled. For 'tis beyond Controversie certain, that the Parliament used to judge even the Peers and greatest Persons in the Kingdom, that they tender'd the Oath of Fidelity to the Officers of the Crown, and that the King's Edicts were never reputed to have the Force of Laws, nor could be put in execution till they had been first receiv'd and register'd in that Assembly: And are not these the most certain and uncontested Marks of Sovereignty?

You know, continued the President, by what dexterous Methods, and under what specious pretexts, our King's have made such great Alterations in a Company that ey'd them too near, and often troubled them. 'Tis true indeed, that 'tis long since the Parliament began to be wholly taken up in hearing and determining Civil and Criminal Causes; but they still enjoy'd that Privilege undisputed, which authoris'd them to examine the Edicts that the King intended to Publish; they Registered such of them as they thought useful and necessary, and if at any time they met with some difficulties, they offer'd their Reasons to the King, who never us'd to neglect them, but when he had a mind to proceed to violent Methods. I confess the Court has sometimes compell'd 'em to Register its Edicts, but then they never fail'd to enter a Protestation that such instances should not be made use of to justify future Violences, but where are all our Privileges now? The King, indeed, sends his Edicts to us, but we are obliged to register them as soon as they are sent, and even such of them that appear to our Consciences to be highly unjust and pernicious,

without daring to offer the least Remonstrance to his Majesty. We have no more Power than simple Countrey Judges, and the Edict for the *Poll-Tax* will pass at all Adventures.

All that you have said is certainly true, reply'd I to the Magistrate, but will you not show the least sign of Life in a Case of such vast Importance? And must we never expect that you will be moved to make at least one glorious Effort to deliver your Countrey from Tyranny and Oppression? Most willingly, cry'd my generous Friend, with Tears in his Eyes: But are you acquainted with the King's Humour? The Times are chang'd, answered I, and we are undone. Remember the Illustrious example of the first President *la Vacquerie*. *Lewis XI.* sent an unjust Edict to the Parliament, which they generously refus'd to enroll; he renew'd his Orders, but without shaking their Constancy. At last the incens'd Prince, fell into a Fury, and threatned to put to Death not only the President, but all the Councillors, if they persisted in their Obstinacy. *La Vacquerie* acquainted his Brethern with the King's Menaces; and these good Magistrates having put on their Habits of Ceremony, went all in a body to the *Louvre*. The King surpris'd to see his Parliament come to pay him a visit with so much solemnity, ask'd suddenly, what brought them thither—

I know all the story, said my Friend, interrupting me hastily, and can tell you the chief President's Answer; we come, Sir, said he to the King, to offer our Heads to Your Majesty; since our Conscience will not permit us to Register the Edict which you sent to us: Very well, reply'd I, but how did that cruel and haughty Prince receive so unexpected a Compliment? He dissembled his Anger, and endeavoured to pacify their  
Minds



Minds by assuring them, that he would never desire them to enroll any Edict contra y to the Laws of the Kingdom, or the Interest of his Subjects. Why then will not you adventure to make a like Attempt? I'm perswaded that the King would be strangely daunted, if the chief President, at the Head of the Parliament, should entertain him with a lively and passionate Representation of the deplorable condition of the Kingdom. But I had forgotten that you have long ago exhausted all your eloquence in writing Panegyricks on *our invincible Monarch*. 'Tis pity that you have not reserv'd some part of it for Discourses of another nature, which would certainly be more seasonable at this time of the Day. Be not cruel to your Friends, answer'd the President; We do all that we are able to do, but we are not under the Reign of a *Lewis XI*. In those Days the Nobility and People of *France* had not lost all their Courage, and the Court dreaded the effects of it. I acknowledge that, replied I, but are you sure that the King would not treat you with as much complaisance, if you spoke to him with the same vigour, and shew'd your selves capable of enlivening the benumm'd Spirits of our Countreymen. Believe me, Mr. President, the King despises you for your Cowardise; and you might make the Court tremble in its turn, if you had the Courage to imitate your Predecessors. After these words, we laid aside Politicks, and began to talk of other Matters.

Yes, Sir, I am still of the same opinion: I know that the Inhabitants of *Paris*, and our other Cities, are extreamly dispirited; but I dare be bold to answer for them, that they would quickly resume their former Vigour, if the Princes of the Blood, the Nobility or Parliament of *Paris* would give them the least encouragement.

ment. They begin to murmur strangely, and I know not whether all their Patience be not already exhausted. 'Tis true, the flatterers of the Court have bellow'd in their Ears so long, that *The King is Master of all the Estates of his Subjects*, that the poor People seem in good earnest to give credit to the most detestable Lie that ever was invented. But how easily will they be undeceiv'd, when it shall be made appear to them, what our subtle Ministers have so industriously hid from them, that Taxes and Subsidies were formerly Levied in *France*, as they are in *England*, and that we never resign'd our ancient Priviledges.

You remember, Sir, when I had the pleasure to enjoy your Conversation in that solitary but delightful place, whither you have chosen to retire, that we spent part of our time in reading the History of *France*, and that we could not find that any Impositions were laid upon the People before the Reign of *Philip the Fair*. Our King's in those Days had no standing Forces, but the Nobility serv'd them at their own charge in those Wars, that were made with the consent of the States-General. If ever any of our Princes rais'd a Subsidy by way of *Taxation*, it was only when the pressing necessity of his Affairs constrain'd him to take that Method, and the *Tax* was Levied but once. And even on such urgent occasions, those Monarchs that had any sense of Humanity or Religion, were very loath to proceed to so rough an expedient. The good *St. Lewis*, by his Testament, enjoin'd his Children not to Tax their Subjects; but, Alas! they who boast of their descent from so Just, so Chaste, and so Religious a Prince, have no more regard to the good Advice that he left them, than they have to the Virtuous example of his Life.

His



His Nephew attempted to raise the Hundred and fiftieth *Denier* of the Revenues of his Subjects. But what was the event? *Paris, Rouen, and Orleans*, revolted, the Commissioners appointed to gather the Taxation were kill'd, and the King was forc'd to dissemble his Indignation. Nor was *Philip the Fair* more successful in his second attempt, to lay an Imposition of Six *Deniers* in the *Livre* on the sale of Commodities; his Orders were universally condemn'd, and he was forc'd to call a Meeting of the States General at *Paris*, to harangue them himself, and represent to them the necessity of his Affairs, after which he obtain'd his desire.

The succeeding Princes observ'd the same Method. Sometimes on urgent occasions, *Aids*, and extraordinary *Subsidies* were Granted, but were never made perpetual, but by the Authority of the States. The King could not augment those perpetual Subsidies that were granted to him, and far less could he impose new ones. The Court Parasites made it their business to perswade *Lewis XI*, that it was a branch of his Prerogative to lay what Impositions he pleas'd on his Subjects. I have already told you what *Philip de Comines* thinks of this Maxim. We have at least as much Reason to complain of *Tyranny* and *Violence* now, as the Subjects of that Prince had in those Days; but our Tongues are ty'd. *Charles VII* was engag'd in a long and chargeable War against *England*; yet he never Levied above *Eighteen hundred thousand Livres per Annum*. 'Tis true, *Lewis XI* augmented the Impositions, to *Three Millions and Seven hundred thousand Livres yearly*, but he had the Character of a very bad Prince, and to say all in one word, a Tyrant. His Son *Charles VIII* fearing to meet with the same Fate, and desirous to live according to the Commandments of God, says *Philip de Comines*, resolv'd to content himself  
with a

with the Crown-lands, together with the Sum of Twelve hundred thousand Livres, which the Estates assembled at Tours, had granted him.

France was happy under the Reign of *Lewis XII*, who was call'd the *Father of the People*, whence we may reasonably infer, that the Face of Affairs is wonderfully chang'd since that time. Under the late King *Lewis XIII*, the Impositions amounted to near *Fourscore Millions*, of which not above *Five and Thirty* were brought into the Treasury, the rest being exhausted by the great charges of the State. *M. Colbert* has found means to raise the King's Revenues to *One hundred and Twenty Millions* and upwards. This could not be done without ruining an infinite number of Families by imposing a prodigious number of new Taxations, besides the enormous augmentation of those that were already established. Now if *One hundred and Twenty Millions* be brought Yearly into the King's Coffers, the total Sum of the Impositions must amount at least to *One hundred and Fifty*, the charges of the State being infinitely augmented since the beginning of the present War: And we shall quickly see them rise to *Two hundred*, for after all, *Lewis the Great* cannot subsist under a *Hundred Millions per Annum*.

Yet we have patience enough to suffer all these Miseries: but what do I talk of Patience and Suffering? No; we admire them, we delight in them, and fancy them to be the greatest glories of our Nation. The King, we cry, is the greatest Monarch in *Europe*: All other Princes are meer Beggars, and miserable Wretches. He has Ten thousand Men in the Troops of his Household; in time of Peace he maintains a Hundred thousand Men in Garrisons, to preserve all those fine Towns that he has Conquer'd and Fortified: At present, Three hundred



hundred thousand Men Fight under his Banners against all the Nations of *Europe*, that are united against him. Incorrigible Sots that we are! that numerous, and magnificent Train of the King's Household; those Hundred thousand Men whom he maintains in time of Peace; that prodigious Army of Three hundred thousand Men, who obey his Orders during the War, and that vast number of strong and well Man'd Garrisons; what do all these things signifie to us? To devour us, to enthrall us, and to make us odious to all *Europe*. Have we not Reason to think our Money well bestow'd.

The Forces that the King kept on Foot in time of Peace, made him more terrible at home than abroad. These Domestick Enemies made us suffer our selves to be oppress'd Daily with new Edicts, without resistance, and forc'd us to be silent spectators when the Nobility were rob'd of their Priviledges, and the Cities depriv'd of their ancient Rights. The Noblemen have ruin'd themselves by their Luxury, and by that chargeable way of living, into which they have been so subtly engag'd. Our Cities have not Canon to defend themselves; their great Guns were taken from them under pretext of sending them to the Frontiers. They are open and defenceless, and even are not suffer'd to repair their decay'd Walls. 'Tis enough for them to erect Statues for the King, or to cause Incriptions to be engrav'd in Honour of that *Immortal Man*.

The Fortifications and numerous Garrisons of *Cazal*, *Strasbourg*, and other frontier places, have drain'd the Kingdom of prodigious Sums of Money; and what advantage does it receive from them, but that they have made them jealous of us, and incens'd our Neighbours against us. That Army of Three hundred thousand Men exhausts all the Men and Money in the Kingdom. All the People turn

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Soldiers;

Soldiers; and perhaps the consequences of a Peace would be more fatal to us, than the War. What must be done with all that Army after the publication of a Peace, which is so much long'd for, and which we might quickly enjoy, if the King would do Justice to his Neighbours, and to his Subjects. The Allies seem resolv'd to force him to do Justice to them: And we might be in a condition to demand Justice from him in such a manner, that he durst not refuse it, if the force of his Arms which is so loudly celebrated by our Orators and Poets, were not more fatal to us than to our Neighbours.

Let us conclude from all that has been said, for 'tis time to put an end to a Letter that is already too long, let us conclude, I say, that the *Poll-Tax* will be impos'd, because we have made ourselves Slaves, and are even fond of our Chains, Adieu: I wish you as happy a new Year, as you can possibly enjoy in such difficult time, and so desolate a Countrey.

Paris, Jan. 2  
1695.

THE



# THE SECOND LETTER.

**A**T last, Sir, the Court has convinc'd us, that she can be *as good as her Word*; and that we may believe her when she *threatens*, whatever Reason we may have to suspect the sincerity of her *Promises*. On the 18th instant, the King by his *Edict* commanded a *General Poll-Tax* to be Levied throughout the Kingdom, as you may see by the Copy of the *Declaration* which I have sent you; and Three Days after it was Registered in the Parliament. This effect of their complaisance does not at all surprize me; they have been for several Years a standing example of blind submission to the Orders of the Court; and at last they have carryed their obedience so far, that we may with a great deal of justice apply to our selves, that which our good Friend *Tacitus* said of his own Age. \* Our Ancestors beheld the last moments of expiring Liberty under the Ministry of Cardinal *Richlieu*; and we are forc'd to suffer the last and utmost rigours of *Savery*.

\* *Sicut vetus ætas vidit quid ultimum in libertate esset, ita nos quid in Servitute Tacit. in Agric.*

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\* *Adempto per inquisitiones loquendi audiendique commercio.*

† *Memoriam quoque ipsam cum voce perdidissemus, si tam in nostra potestate esset oblivisci, quam tacere.*

if we could as easily forget as be silent. But we shall not, by my consent, be altogether such tame Slaves as these Romans : Let us at least have the courage to remember that under the former Reigns we oblig'd even

\* *Res olim dissociabiles principatum & libertatem.*

our haughtiest and most ambitious Monarchs to suffer \* Liberty to subsist with Sovereignty ; for we need only cast our Eyes upon *England* to be convinc'd, that these two things are not incompatible ; and let us not be afraid to tell our Friends, what we think of our Miseries. I have sent you some Reflexions on the King's Declaration ; I hope you will, in requital, let me know your thoughts of it, after you have perus'd them.

It does not at all resemble those Edicts which *Tiberius* sent to the Senate of *Rome*. They were \* short and modest, this long and extravagant. I could easily

\* *Verba per pauca, & sensu permolesto, Tacit. Annal.*

forgive its first fault, considering the vast number of Regulations that were to be cram'd into it ; but I can by no means bear the Second ; as much as I have been accusom'd to the lofty stile of those Edicts that have been publish'd since the beginning of the War, and of the Circulatory Letters that are sent from time to time to the Bishops, to Order *Te Deum* to be Sung for the taking of some Town, or gaining of a Victory. These great words, *The glory of the State ; the Prosperity with which Heaven has blest our Reign ; the Powers of Europe*  
United



*United together, to carry on an unjust War against us; the Obstinacy of our Enemies, who seem insensible of their Losses, and of the Misery of their Subjects; the unexhaustible Power of France, when manag'd by a skilful Hand; the sure Funds that we possess in the Hearts of our Subjects, and in their Zeal for the Service of their Sovereign, and for the glory of the French Nation.* These seemingly Fine, and studied expressions are very unsutable to the present posture of the King's Affairs. They are meer huffing *Rhodomontades*, which may cast a Mist before the Eyes of the dull and unthinking croud; but they will appear ridiculous to the judicious and considering part of Mankind.

You will be of the same opinion, if you will give your self the trouble to examine with me, what all these magnificent expressions can be reasonably suppos'd to signifie. What is that *Glory of the State* which has excited the envy of the *Potentates of Europe*? Might it not be inferr'd from hence, that we have enjoy'd so much happiness, since the King began to Reign, and have liv'd in so great an abundance of all things, and in so profound a Peace, that our Neighbours, jealous of the happiness and riches of *France*, had united themselves together against her, and were come with a design to lay wast our Provinces, set Fire to our Houses and Castles, and raise our Cities, meerly because they could not endure the vexations and mortifying sight of a People that enjoy'd more freedom and Plenty, and liv'd more contentedly than all the other Nations of *Europe*? If this was the case, the King might indeed complain, and justly too, that the *glory of his State*, that is, the happiness of all his Subjects, had rais'd the envy of the *Potentates of Europe*, and that they had united themselves together, to carry on an unjust War against him.

But besides that our Neighbours are not capable of such base and inhuman designs, the King has been ve-

ry careful not to give them the least occasion to envy the happiness of those who live under his Dominion. *England, Germany, and Holland*, have seen the Trade of *France* ruin'd, the People over-loaded with Impositions, the Provinces drain'd of Men and Money, and the King's Subjects force'd to leave their Native Country, to seek their Bread in the remotest corners of the Universe. But far from *envying* the happiness and glory of the *French* Nation, our generous Neighbors have lamented our misfortunes, and to the utmost of their Power assisted those that came to implore their Help and Protection.

'Tis a great while since we forgot the proper signification of certain words; the *glory of the State*, that is, according to our modern Phraseology, the Pride and Haughtiness of the King; to *love the Publick good*, that is, to furnish His Majesty with means to satisfy his Luxury and Ambition. But can you imagine, that the *English, Germans, and Dutch*, would take such a terrible Alarm at these improvements and alterations of our Language. They might indeed laugh at the folly of the *French*, who fancy that the Power of a King that oppresses them, is the *glory of their State* and Nation: But I durst swear that they were never jealous of our pretended happiness, so long as the King continued to place all his Glory, and that of the Nation in making *Versailles* the most magnificent Palace in the World, in burying several Millions in that proud Structure, in squandering away his Treasure on Cascades and Water-works, in throwing away the lives of a prodigious number of his best Soldiers, to alter the course of the River *Eure*, and in reducing the Noblemen that were in his Service to Beggery, by a forc'd extravagancy in Cloths, Horses, and Equipage. So long, I say, as the King's Ambition aspir'd not to higher objects than these,

'tis



'tis very probable that his Neighboring Potentates might condemn his Pride, bewail the blindness of the Lords and Gentlemen of *France*, who consum'd their Fortunes to so little purpose, and pity those Wretches that were starv'd to maintain so extravagant a *Luxury*: but I am confident, that they had not the least intentions to combine together against *France*.

Thus far I dare undertake for those Princes, but no farther: For without doubt they were otherwise affected than I have represented them hitherto, when they beheld the taking of *Strasburg* with several other Places of importance, and the pretended Acquisition of *Casal*, to the prejudice of the lawful Heirs of the House of *Mantua*; when they saw *Fort Lewis* and the Citadel of *Hunningen* built to curb the *Swiss* Cantons, and several Princes of *Germany*; a project laid to enslave *England*, and render it dependant on the Court of *France*, Sovereigns treated with the utmost contempt; the *Empire*, *Spain*, and the *United Provinces*, chain'd at the feet of a Statue which was erected at *Paris*, by an extravagant flatterer; and above a Hundred and fifty thousand Men ready upon the first occasion, either to attack *Germany*, or seize on the rest of the *Netherlands*. This, Sir, is that pretended glory of the State, that has excited, not the *Envy*, but the indignation and just Revenge of the Potentates of *Europe*.

The *States General* of the *United Provinces*, had for several Years, been justly esteem'd the most Potent Republick in *Europe*. They enjoy'd all the blessings of a profound Peace; Arts flourish'd among them; their Trade furnish'd them with great abundance of Money, and of all the conveniencies of Life; and the People were so highly satisfied with the easiness of the Government

\* *Rum difficillimam affecuti sunt, ut illis ne voo quidem opus sit. Tacit. de moribus Germanorum.*

vernment, that the saying of \* *Tacitus* concerning the ancient *Germans* might have been apply'd to them. Even their best Friends could not have made a wish to their advantage; and they had nothing to desire of God, but that he would suffer them long to enjoy so blest and peaceful a Life. The *glory of their State* was *Real* and *Solid* glory. *Denmark* ow'd its Liberty to them; and they had stopt the Kings Progress in the *Spanish Netherlands* by Negotiating that *Triple-League* which mortified *France* so effectually. All *Europe* own'd that they had Reason to secure their own Liberty by keeping so troublesom and Ambitious a Neighbour at a distance from their Frontiers; and praised their generosity for protecting a *Minor Prince* against the unjust Attacks of so Potent an Enemy.

There needed no more to incense the King against them, nor could his Wrath be appeas'd without declaring a War under pretext of the *ill satisfaction* which the States had given to the Court of *France*. These are the very words which the King makes use of in a Letter which he wrote to them a little before. All the World was surpriz'd at the strangeness of a Phrase which they had never heard before: These two Words were perfect strangers to one another, and People could not forbear laughing at the odd figure which they made at their first meeting. But whence proceeded this *ill satisfaction*? We are told that it was caus'd by I know not what *Medal*, which bore the following Inscription, *Assertis Legibus & Sacris: defensis exteris Regibus; vindicatâ per orbem Christianum Marium libertate. Egregiâ Pace virtute armorum partâ.* You know what a pother the Court made



made about this *Inscription*: How insolent they are, cry'd our flatterers? Could the *Romans* have spoken otherwise after the Destruction of *Numantium* and *Carthage*.

But after all, I profess I cannot see the least Reason that could provoke them to make such a hideous noise: For there is nothing express'd by these words, but what is undeniably true. Had not the *States General of the United Provinces* oblig'd *Spain* to conclude a Peace with them? Had they not asserted their Laws and Religion by force of Arms; And had they not preserv'd Liberty of Trade and of Navigation? The *Inscription* of this Medal is infinitely more modest and exactly true, than any of those that are to be seen at *Verseilles*, the *Town-House*, the *Place des Victoires*, the *Gates of Paris*, and those *Citadels* that have been built in *Flanders*, and elsewhere. But suppose that there had been really some fault in the *Inscription*, could that be a sufficient Reason for the King to set all *Europe* on Fire, to destroy above Two hundred thousand Men, to lay waste more than Fifty Leagues of Land, and to ruin his own Subjects? Confess with me, Sir, that the King had more Reason to complain of the indiscretion of his Secretaries, for giving him *ill satisfaction*, when they made him say, That *the glory of France has Excited the envy of the Allies*; since it may be very easily prov'd, that the King himself was jealous of the true and solid glory of a Neighbouring Republick, and that his Vexation and Spite excited him to kindle a bloody War, which his brace of Historians, by their own confession, are not able to justify.

*Quis tulerit Gracchos de seditone querentes?*

G.

However

However, in the opinion of our flatterers, it cannot be deny'd, that *Heaven has blest* the King's Reign with such an uninterrupted course of *Prosperity*, that his Neighbours have been mov'd with Jealousy. These words, *Prosperity* and the  *blessings of Heaven* are very equivocal, and their true meaning is not unfrequently mistaken. A happy crime usurps the name of *Prosperity*; and the Fortunate unjustly fancy themselves to be the favourites of Heaven. 'Tis the Language of *Constantinople*, that the *Prosperity* with which Heaven had blest the *Ottoman Empire*, excited the *Envy* of the *Christian Potentates* that join'd together to carry on an unjust War against the *Grand Signior*. What is the meaning of all this, but that God in his just Anger against his People, has suffered those *Infidels* to take advantage of our Divisions and of the weakness of *Christian Princes*, and to lay waste the best Provinces in *Europe*? Those who are call'd Conquerors, are usually but the *Rods of God*, whom he makes use of to scourge both their Subjects and their Neighbours. He *blesse*s their Reign, as he blest of old the Reigns of *Sennacherib*, *Nebuchadnezzar*, *Mahomet II*, and *Solyman*. But the Day of the Lord will come, when he shall visit the Pride of the stout Hearts of the Kings of *Assur* and *Babylon*: He will also raise up a new Warriour, and send forth his *Anointed* and his *Shepherd*, who shall deliver and gather together his dispersed People, and break to pieces the Rod which God took up in the Day of his Indignation, to punish our Sins, and scourge us for our back-slidings.

Be not afraid, Sir, I beseech you, that I intend to turn Prophet. Only give me leave to say, that we may then, and not till then, conclude, that God has truly *blest the King's Reign*, when we shall see that God has taken him by the Hand to destroy the Nations of the Infidels,



Infidels, and to disarm the Enemies of the name of Christ; when we shall perceive that the Almighty marches at the head of our Armies to make the King the restorer of *Jerusalem*, and repairer of the Ruins of the Temple of God. The Preachers of the Gospel, to the shame of our Age be it spoken; are the King's greatest flatterers, and but too often have the baseness to tell the King to his Face, that he is, what he ought, and we wish him to be. But we have the pleasure to see them publicly contradicted by the *Popes* themselves. 'Tis well known, that at *Rome* they are so far from believing the King to be a Prince whom God has wonderfully rais'd up for the Honour and Deliverance of his Church, that they speak there of the Wars which he has kindled as they do at *Vienna* and *Madrid*, and Thank God for his Conquests and Victories no otherwise than they do at *London* and at the *Hague*. Do the King's Ministers imagine that we are ignorant of the true sentiments of the Pope and Court of *Rome*? and have they not made the King a publick Jest to all the World, by making him say with so much confidence, that God has *blest his Reign*, and Crown'd him with his greatest favours.

But we ought to do Justice to all Mankind; let us therefore acknowledge to the Honour of the *Emperor*, that God does visibly protect that Prince, and that he has lately wrought signal Miracles for him. The *Turks* had besieged his Capital City, and he saw himself within an ace of losing the greatest part of his Hereditary Provinces. We all trembled for him; but God struck the *Vizier* with a Spirit of Infatuation. The *King of Poland*, and the *Duke of Lorrain* had time to come to the relief of *Vienna* with a Potent Army; the *Turk* lost his best Troops, and the *Emperor* in less than Five Years, regain'd

regain'd almost all that which had cost the Turks above an Age to Conquer in the Kingdom of *Hungary*. What was the countenance of our Court during the siege of *Vienna*; you were asham'd of it as well as I, and you spoke of it with Indignation. They appear'd very well pleas'd with the *Emperors* misfortunes; they expected impatiently the return of the Courier, who they hop'd would bring the good News of the Surrender of that City, and were even making Preparations for the Reception of the Deputies of the *Germans*, who, they concluded, would come to implore the King's Assistance. The King had an Army ready to march into *Germany*, and thought to make himself Master of that Countrey under pretext of assisting it. But the raising of the Siege of *Vienna* at once broke the measures of the Court and of the *Divan*, and overthrew all their Projects. And those well-appointed Troops that were design'd for *Germany*, were employ'd on the Projects of *Maintenon*, where the greatest part of them lost their lives.

God continued still more and more to bless the Justice of the *Emperor's* Arms. He made great Progresses in the *Turkish* part of *Hungary*: He retook *Belgrade*, and advanc'd even as far as *Nicopoli*. Is it not clear beyond exception, that this remarkable course of *Prosperity* excited the *Envy* of the King, which engag'd him in an unjust War against a Prince that was busied in repulsing the common Enemy of the Christian Religion. At the same time that the Court was giving Orders to demolish the Churches of our *Protestants*, she was labouring to find out some colourab'e pretext to hinder the *Emperor* from turning the *Mosques* of *Hungary*, into *Christian Churches*. And what an impious piece of Villany was this? At last the business of *Cologne* furnish'd her with  
the



the pretext that she desir'd, but it was certainly a very bad one : For what right had the King to interpose in the Election of an *Archbishop* of *Cologne*? and because he had an itching desire to seize on the *Palatinate*, he took the advantage of a pretended right of the Dutchess of *Orleans*, to the Estates of the late *Electo*r *Palatine* her Brother.

Immediately an Army was sent to invade *Germany* : The *Dauphin* took *Philipsbourg* ; and the Cities of *Mentz*, *Worms*, *Spire*, *Manheim*, and *Heidelberg*, with several other places surrendred without Resistance. God usually blesses such Attempts ; for he does not always work Miracles to defend us against an Enemy that breaks Truces and Treaties of Peace confirm'd with the most solemn Oaths, to assault us unprepar'd. When I say that God blesses such Attempts, you cannot mistake my Meaning ; 'tis plain, that I speak in the Style of the Court, where 'tis also said in the same sense, that God blest His Majesty's Arms, when he broke the Peace of the *Pyrenees* to invade the Dominions of a *Minor Prince*, who rely'd on the Faith of a Treaty made with *Spain*, or when he rush'd like an impetuous Deluge upon the *United Provinces*, who never design'd to give him the least ill satisfaction. These are the glorious Exploits of *Lewis the Great*, this is that course of Prosperity with which God has blest His Reign ; this is that which has excited the Envy of the Potentates of Europe, and engag'd them in an unjust War against him. Let us examine these last words, I beseech you ; a little Attention will serve to discover the ridiculousness of them.

'Tis not my Business to draw up a *Manifesto* for the Allies ; and they are able enough to demonstrate the Justice of their Arms without my Assistance. But since we have begun to examine the Preface of the King's De-

claration, let us proceed to enquire, Whether the Author of it could say, with the least shadow of Reason, That the Princes of *Europe* are combin'd together to *carry on an unjust War against France*? In the first place, 'tis certain, that no Prince in *Europe* has invaded *France* since the *Pyrenean Treaty*; But how many Irruptions has our King made into the *Spanish* and *United Netherlands*, *Germany* and the Dominions of the Duke of *Savoy*: And the rest of the Confederates have only put themselves in a posture of Defence, or assisted their injur'd Allies. So that these seems to be a prejudication in favour of the *Confederates*. The King always begun the War, but the question is, whether he had ever examin'd the Justice of his Cause before God, or made it appear to Judicious and disinterested Persons? If he has done neither, he stands Condemn'd before God and Men, for robbing his Neighbours, answerable before both for all the Desolations with which he has fill'd the *Spanish Netherlands*, the *United Provinces*, *Germany*, *Savoy*, and *Catalonia*, and guilty of the Blood of above a Million of Men? and is also convicted before the same Tribunal, for placing his delight in ruining his own Kingdom, and reducing his Subjects to the last extremities of Misery. Does not this course of *Prosperity*, with which *Heaven has blest the Reign of Lewis the Great*, make you tremble when you reflect upon it, and fill you with Amazement and Horror.

\* *Inferre bella finitimis, ac  
pulos sibi non molestos sola reg-  
nandi cupiditate conterere &  
subdere, quid aliud quam  
grande Latrocinium nominan-  
tum est. August. de civit.  
Dei, lib. 4. cap. 4. & 6.*

\* He that makes War upon his Neighbours, says *S. Austin*, meerly to satisfy a Lust of Dominion, and subdues Nations that never provok'd him is usually extoll'd by his flatterers as a great Conqueror, but to speak sincerely, he is only



only an *Illustrious Robber*. \* The Captain of a band of Robbers, and the Commander of a Crew of Pyrates are *little Conquerors*; and a Conqueror who follows

\* Rem tã Injustitiã quid sunt  
Regna nisi na na Latrocinia?  
& ipsa Latrocinia quid sunt  
nisi paucis Regna?

blindly the impetuous desires of a lawless Ambition, is but a *great Thief*. Thou Wretch, said the greatest Conqueror in the World to a Pirate that was brought before him, what Reason mov'd thee to interrupt the liberty of Trade on the Sea? The same, my Lord, answer'd the bold Corsair, that moves you to disturb the quiet of the who'e Earth. I am a *Pirate*, because I am Master only of a small Vessel; and you are a *Conqueror* because you Command a great Fleet.

It is then an uncontroverted Truth, and receiv'd for such by all Nations, that a Prince who Attacks his Neighbours only with a design to aggrandize himself and to purchase Glory, is in the sight of God and Men a Robber and a Pirate. It is not only lawful, but a Duty to make Leagues against him, as it is to join together, to pursue a Thief, or chase a Pirate. Now, tell me, Sir, whether you could have the confidence to maintain, in a company of Honest and Intelligent Persons, that the King had lawfull Reasons to invade the *Spanish Netherlands* after the Death of the late King of *Spain*, to enter the *United Provinces* with a formidable Army, to send his Son to *Germany* to take *Philipsburgh*, and to seize on the *Palatinate*, and the greatest part of the *Electoates* of *Triers*, *Mentz*, and *Cologne*! What could you alledge to justify the first Attempt, of which the two last, are fatal Consequences? Would you have recourse to the pretended Rights of the late Queen to *Hainault*, and *Brabant*? She had renounc'd them in the most solemn Treaty that has been seen within our Memory

mory ; and the King her Husband had sworn upon the Holy Gospels to observe all the Articles. If that Renunciation be not good, there can be no Faith or Religion in the World, and 'tis a folly for Princes to treat together. Let them henceforth lay down their Arms when both Parties are weary of Fighting, and reserve a right to renew the War as soon as they shall be in a condition to prosecute it : For such Maxims would be found to be infinitely less pernicious than the impious Politicks of those who make a mock of Religion, and swear by all that is most venerable in it, to observe the conditions of a Treaty which they are resolv'd to break upon the first favourable occasion. But you will perhaps say, that the King of *Spain* constrain'd his Daughter to act against her true Interest, and treated her with the highest Injustice. *Constraint* and *Injustice*, Sir ! Can any Man of sense make so ridiculous a Supposition ? The Queen might have declar'd, that she would not renounce her Right to *Hainault*, *Brabant*, and the rest of her Father's Dominions ; and he would have taken care to Marry her to such a Husband, and in such a manner, as might have been most conducive to the Interest of the *Spanish Monarchy*, and to the Peace and Tranquility of *Europe*. But the *Infanta* chose rather to be *Queen* of a great Nation, than to be *Countess of Hainault*, and *Duchess of Brabant*, or to preserve a claim to a succession which she was not sure to enjoy, as indeed she never did : And with what Reason then could she complain of *Injustice* or *Constraint* ?

Thus 'tis plain, that the King had not any lawful Reason to break the *Pyrenean Treaty* : And it must be acknowledged, that the *States General* of the *United Provinces* acted a very Wise and Honourable part, when they negotiated the *Tripple-League* to stop the Progress  
of



of his Majesty's Arms in the *Spanish Netherlands*. It was their Duty to defend a King who was their Neighbour and Ally, against the unjust Attacks of a Potent Enemy that threatned to dispossess him according to the Maxim of an \* ancient Father of the Church. Besides, Prudence oblig'd them to keep at a distance from their Frontiers, an ambitious Prince, who assum'd a right to interpret Treaties to his own advantage, and who, they might reasonably suppose, would not fail sooner or later, to make the same use of the House of *Burgundy* to claim the *United Provinces*, as he then did of the Queen's Right to *Hainault* and *Brabant*. And did he not afterwards in effect revive the pretensions of the House of *Austria* to *Strasburgh*, and the rest of those places that depend upon *Alsatia*. I confess that it is not just to make War upon a Neighbour, who is grown too powerful, under pretext that 'tis our Interest to weaken him, lest he should be one Day in a condition to hurt us. But it has been always esteem'd lawful to oppose a Neighbour that aggrandizes himself unjustly, or who having at the best but a controverted Right to certain Provinces that are in the possession of another Prince, chuses rather to have recourse to an open War, than to refer the difference to the Judgment of their common Allies, or other disinterested States \* " A Prince that is truly just and merciful, never makes War, but when the necessity of his Circumstances, renders it unavoidable or when there are no other means left to preserve or put himself in possession of that which properly belongs to him.

\* *Qui non repellit Injuriam a socio, si potest, tam est in vicio, quam ille qui facit. lib. 1. Offic. cap. 36.*

\* *Justum bellum quibus necessarium, & pia arma quibus nulla nisi in armis relinquitur spes. Liv. lib. 10.*

\* *Clementia alieno Sanguini  
tanquam suo parcat, & scit  
homini non esse homine prodigē  
utendum. Seneca. Epist. 87.*

\* “ He is as tender of the Blood  
“ of others as of his own, and  
“ he is sensible that a Man ought  
“ not lightly to hazard the Lives  
“ of his Fellow Creatures. But these Maxims of equi-  
table *Heathens*, are utterly unknown at the Court of the  
most *Christian King*.

Nor are they better acquainted there, with the Com-  
mandment that Christ left us, to *forgive Injuries*. Would  
any Prince that had the least sense of Christianity, have  
presum'd, in the face of all *Europe*, to declare War  
against the *Hollanders*, under the pretext of I know not  
what *ill satisfaction* that they had given him? For what  
had they done to provoke his Anger? If it proceeded  
from the care which they took to negotiate the *Tripple-*  
*League*, it was certainly very unjust; since the *States*  
acted in that Affair, like Wise and Christian Politicians.  
Or was it the above mentioned *Medal* that occasioned  
all this *ill satisfaction*? Was there any thing in it that  
was not exactly true, or that could give him the least  
cause of Offence? But suppose that it had been injuri-

\* *Magni animi est injurias in  
summâ potentia pati, nec quic-  
quam est gloriosius Principe  
impunè læso Senec. de clem. l. 1.  
cap. 20.*

ous to him: \* “ True magnani-  
“ mity, says a Pagan Philosopher,  
“ consists in suffering Injuries  
“ even when we are in the height  
“ of Prosperity: And a Prince is  
“ never more truly great and glorious, than when he  
“ leaves these unpunish'd, who have most highly offend-  
“ ed him. Besides, the King was further oblig'd to for-  
give that pretended Injury, because the *States* were not  
only sorry that their *Medal* had displeas'd him, but  
took all possible care to suppress it, in so much, that  
it is no where extant, but in the Cabinets of some cu-  
rious Persons.



The Court of *France* is not so observant of the Rules of Decency: For though the Proud and Insolent Inscriptions on the Gates of *St. Denis* and *St. Martin* had given offence to the greatest Sovereigns in *Europe*; they were so far from offering them satisfaction, that they suffer'd a Courtier, who would have certainly pass'd for the greatest Fool in the World, if he had not been too well acquainted with the weak side of his Prince, to out do the grossest flatteries of the Provost of the Merchants and *Echevins* of *Paris*. He was even recompens'd for erecting a Statue, at the Feet of which, the King's pretended Enemies were represented in so unworthy a manner, that 'tis impossible to look upon it without Horror: And the most celebrated Wits of the *French Academy*, were excited in emulation of one another, to make Inscriptions for that ridiculous Statue, which never any reasonable Person could Read without Indignation.

Or was it the *Dutch Gazettiers* Wit that gave the King this *ill satisfaction*? We are assur'd by certain Authors, whose Books were Printed at *Paris*, with His Majesty's Privilege; that this did not a little contribute to the Declaration of War; 'Tis strange, that such able Ministers as *M. le Tellier*, and *M. Colbert*, should not have represented to the King, \* that

the Wisdom as well as the Moderation of *Julius* and *Augustus Caesar*, never appear'd with more Lustre than by neglecting those that writ against them.

You know, Sir, that Works of that nature are \* wont to fall of themselves, when they are neglected; but when he whom they Attack, grows Angry at their Insolence, he gives the World occasion to believe, that there is too much Truth in the reproaches

\* *Tulere ista & reliquere; haud facile dixerim mod. ratione magis an Sapientia Tacitus Annal. 4.*

\* *Spretæ exolescunt, si irascere, agnita videntur.*

that are fasten'd upon him. *Tacitus* has a judicious Remark to this purpose, which ought to moderate the Heat of those who meditate Revenge against an Author

\* *Punitis ingenis, gliscit  
authoritas.*

of a biting Jest, or an ingenious Satyr. \* The most probable way to advance the credit of such a Book, is to cause it to be burnt, or to chastise its Author. \* And those Princes

\* *Qui servitiâ usi sunt, nisi  
dedecus sibi, atque illis gloriam  
peperere.*

who use such rigorous Methods, do a far greater Injury to their own Reputation, than to the

Author of the piece that offends them. The Book runs through all Hands, and People are curious to know the Reason that procur'd the Author so severe a Treatment. Judge then how great the curiosity of our Posterity will be, and how eagerly they will examine those bitter Reflexions of the *Dutch Gazettier*, which incens'd the greatest Monarch in the World to such a degree, that because he could not punish the Author, he march'd himself at the Head of a Hundred Thousand Men to destroy the Countrey where these Satyrs were Printed.

The Inhabitants of *Antioch* having broken to pieces the Statue of the Emperor *Theodosius*, he resolv'd to raze that ungrateful and seditious City. Immediately the Bishop *Flavian* went to appease the incens'd Mind of that Prince, whose indignation was far more just than that of *Lewis the Great* against the *States General* of the

*Chrysostom. homil. 4. ad po-  
pul Antioch.*

*United Provinces.* \* The glory of Monarchs, my Lord, said the Prelate to *Theodosius*, consists not so much in beating their Enemies, as in subduing their Passions. Victory is not wholly your own; for your Officers and Soldiers claim a part of it; but in an Action of Wisdom and Goodness you have no Companions, and that is a Trophy to which none

but



but your self has a Right to pretend. 'Tis not enough that you have Conquer'd the Barbarians, if you do not also Conquer your own Anger. Show those Infidels, that no Power on Earth is able to stand in opposition to Jesus Christ. Glorifie your Sovereign Master by pardoning the Faults of your Brethren, that, at the great and terrible Day of the Lord, he may look upon your Errors with the Eye of a Father, rather than of a Judge, and that you may receive the same Forgiveness from him, that you have granted to others. Why do not those whose Dignity and Function oblige them to inform the King of His Duty, speak to him with equal Freedom. *Theodosius* had more Reason to be ill satisfied with the insolency of his own Subjects, than His Majesty had to be Angry with the States. The overthrowing of a Statue was a far more provoking Injury, than the reverse of a Medal coin'd by strangers, or the Jest of a disown'd Gazettier. *Theodosius* design'd to destroy a Seditious City; *Lewis* endeavour'd to ruine entire Provinces. Ought not the managers of his Conscience to have represented to him, that so cruel a Revenge would not fail to fill the Hearts of *Christians* with Horror, and give occasion of scandal to the *Infidels*. Nevertheless, instead of Offering him such good Advice, the Bishops and Preachers employed all their Eloquence, either in magnifying his Victories, or in demonstrating even to himself, that he was the greatest and most glorious Monarch in the Universe.

Do not tell me, that the King undertook the War against a *Protestant* State, a People who make it their boast to be the Protectors of *Heresy* in *Europe*, and spread it through the other parts of the World. For besides, that a *Christian* ought to forgive *Hereticks* and even *Infidels*, as well as *Catholicks*, I dare assure you, that a Zeal for Religion was not the motive of that War. No sooner  
had

had *Germany* declar'd War against us, but we detested those very Cities, whose Churches *Cardinal de Bouillon* had blest and reconcil'd with so much Pomp and Ceremony. I know not whether it was a sentiment of Devotion that made the *Mareschal de B-lfonds* delay the Execution of the Orders that were sent to him, to leave those places, where the Catholick Religion was re-established ; but I am assur'd that the Court was very much dissatisfied with him for it.

Thus, Sir, we see, that the Pretext for the *Dutch* War was even less specious than that which was formerly made use of for the War with *Spain*. One of my Friends was so thoroughly convinc'd of the unjustness of this War, that he left the Service. Do not fancy that he was a *Huguenot*, you know him, he is a good *Catholick*: And you may remember that at the same time, the *Mareschal de Scomberg*, and other *Protestant* Gentlemen were in the Army. I had the curiosity to ask my Friend what made him leave a good Post at a time when Employments were so much courted by others. He told me that his Conscience would not permit him to serve the King in a manifestly unjust War. Why do you trouble your self with those things, reply'd I ; 'tis the King's business, and that of his Ministers to examine that Controversy, and Obedience is the Subject's only part. You tell me nothing, said he, but what I believ'd before, I had Read *Grotius de jure belli & pacis*, who has convinc'd me that I ought not to serve my Prince in a War, which I know to be unjust. Read that Book, added he, and you will be of the same opinion.

At that time I was taken up with other Matters, and contented my self with doing what I saw others do before me. But after the Peace of *Nimeghen*, I began  
to



to reflect upon what my Friend said to me, and resolv'd to consult the Book that he recommended to me. No sooner had I cast my Eyes upon it, but I observ'd with pleasure, that it was dedicated to the late King *Lewis XIII.* The moderation of that Learned Man, is acknowledged by all the World, and 'tis also well known that he was a great Friend to the Sovereign Authority of Kings: And yet, in the first place he maintains, that \* when a Prince asks the Advice of his Subjects concerning a War, which he desigus to undertake, or gives them Liberty to chuse, whether they will serve in his Armies, or stay at home in Peace; 'tis their Duty to follow the same Maxims which their Sovereign ought to observe before he begin the War: That is, that they ought not to advise him to undertake the War without just and indispenfible Reasons; and if he persist in his resolution, they cannot without a crime offer him their assistance, to shed innocent Blood. What can there be alledged against so clear a Decision? And indeed it makes me tremble, as oft as I think of it, not for the King's Ministers, since these Gentlemen are not wont to consult either the light of Reason, or Rules of the Gospel; but for an infinite number of People, who put themselves into His Majesty's Service, without considering what they do, and oftentimes even against the Dictates of their Conscience, which tells them that the War is unjust.

\* *Si aut ad deliberationem adhibentur, aut libera ipsis optio datur militandi aut quiescendi, easdem regulas sequi debent, quas illi, qui suapte arbitrio pro se & pro aliis bella suscipiunt. Grotius de jure belli & pacis, lib. 2 cap. 26.*

But perhaps the Nobility, who never march, but when the *Arrier-ban* is summon'd, are more excusable. Let

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us hear what the same Author adds. \* If the Prince, says he, by a positive command, ordain his Subjects to follow him to the War, they are oblig'd to disobey his Orders, when they are convinc'd, that the War is unjust. For 'tis an uncontrovert-

\* *Si edicatur ipsis ut militent, quod fieri solet, siquidem constet ipsis injustam esse belli causam, abstinere omnino debent. Deo potius obediendum quam hominibus &c. Idem.*

ed Maxim among *Jews* and *Heathens*, as well as among *Christians*, that *it is better to obey God than Men*. This determination of *Grotius* furnish'd me with this reflection, that the ancient Custom of *France* and other *European Nations*, of which I took Notice in the Letter that I had the Honour to write to you about the beginning of this Month, was ground'd upon very good Reasons. The Lords and Gentlemen were not obliged to serve the King till after the War was decreed in the meeting of the States General of the Kingdom: The Reason is plain; it was fit that an Affair of such vast importance on which the Lives of so many Men did depend, and which might ruin whole Nations, should be gravely debated, and diligently examin'd both by the Prince himself who was to undertake it, and those who were to serve him.

But what shall the Subjects do, when the Justice of the War in which they are like to be engag'd, appears only doubtful to them? It may seem perhaps a needless piece of curiosity, to start Cases that we never had occasion to experience, 'tis certain, that *Lewis the Great* never undertook a War that was not manifestly unjust. Yet there may have been some Persons who imagin'd that the late Queen's claim was at least disputable. *France* publish'd whole Volumes to demonstrate the Justice of her Pretensions, and *Spain* answer'd them. This might probably disquiet the minds of some *French*  
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men, that were not able to decide the Controversie: Now the Question is, whether such Persons were oblig'd in Conscience to Fight under the King's Standards. *Grotius* acknowledges that there are some Lawyers that hold the Affirmative, but positively declares himself for the Negative, which he confirms with a Reason that to me seems to be convincing. \* In all dubious Cases, says he, A Wise Man always chuses the safest side: Now 'tis certainly the safest way to abstain from an Action that may engage us to injure our Neighbour, and shed Human Blood. This Book has been done into *French*, and the Translation dedicated to the King and would to God that not only His Majesty, but his Ministers of State, the Nobility and Clergy would bestow some few Hours on Reading that piece with Attention. There would not be so much Blood shed, so many Nations laid Waste, and such a vast number of Persons reduc'd to Beggery. The Preachers of the Gospel would cease to extol those Generals, whose Virtue for the most part, consists in nothing else, but in stifling the gnawing Remonstrances of an awak'd Conscience, to serve the abominable Ambition of their Master. But how shall private Persons be inform'd whether the King had lawful Reasons to undertake the War, unless by his *Manifestos* and *Declarations*? Thus my Friend perceiving that the King had taken up Arms against the *Dutch*, meerly to be reveng'd upon them, for the *ill satisfaction* that they had given him, he chose rather to quit an advantageous Post, than to expose himself to the reproaches of his Conscience, by continuing to

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\* Qui dubitat contemplative, d. bet judicio activo eligere partem tutiorem, est autem pars tutior abstinere bello. Laudantur Esseni quod inter alia jurarent non occituros se cuiquam ne si juberentur quidem; Imitatores eorum Pythagorei, qui Jamblico teste, bello abstinebant, causa addita quia bellum cedes imperat.

serve in a War which he believed to be unjust. If they who serve in our Armies had imitated the Example of my generous Friend, if they had examin'd the King's *Manifestoes*, they would not have been so acquainted with their own and their Countries Interest. Good God! Will the *French* Nation never learn Wisdom? Will they never be weary of being led to the Army like a pack of Hounds to a Hunting-match? Will they always continue to sacrifice their Fortunes, their Liberty and their Life, meerly to give their King the pleasure of assuming the Title of *Lewis the Great*? But 'tis time to proceed to the consequences of the *Dutch War*; and to take a view of the glaring part of the King's Life.

The taking of above *Forty* Towns in the compass of one Campaign, the Surrender of *Maastricht* after a Siege of Thirteen Days, the Conquest of *Cambrai*, *S. Omer*, *Ypres*, and *Valenciennes*, the Battels of *Cassel* and *Senef*, and the disadvantageous Peace which the Allies were forc'd to make, may serve indeed for materials to stuff a flattering *Panegyrick* or *Inscription*, but all together will not amount to one single Argument, to prove that God has blest the Reign of the King, and the Justice of his Arms. To measure the Justice of an Attempt by the Happiness of its Success, is the way to be eternally deceiv'd, and to justify the blackest Crimes. Temporal Prosperity is not usually a mark of the particular favour of Heaven. The God whom we adore, is infinitely Wise; He suffers the Righteous to be afflicted, and the Wicked to prosper in their Day. Let us adore then the unsearchable Mysteries of his Providence; and let us judge of True Merit by the Light of Reason, and by the Rules of the Gospel.

It must be acknowledg'd that the King was very well serv'd by his Ministers, and by the Generals of his  
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his Forces, during that War. But it was not a very surprising Accident, that a Republick that was at once assaulted by Land and by Sea, could not resist a King that came Thundering against her with an Army of a Hundred thousand Men, commanded by the two greatest Captainsthat *Europe* had seen in many Yeats before. He took *Forty* Towns in one Campaign, it cannot be deny'd ; but was he not forced to abandon them with shame, as soon as the *Imperial* Army had seiz'd on some places of the *Rhine*? *Maestricht* was Surrendred after a Siege of Thirteen Days; a great Miracle indeed! For how could the *States* relieve it? The Inscriptions on the Gates of *St. Denis* and *St. Martin* do more Honour to the *States*, than to the King. He broke in upon them, 'tis true, like a furious and overbearing Deluge; and they were not able to put a stop to his Progress; yet I do not believe, that all this Action gain'd him one Admirer. But that *Holland*, should force the most Potent Monarch in *Europe*, to abandon his unjust Conquests, and to sue for a Peace by offering to restore to them the only place that he still retain'd of all that he had taken from them, is an event so little common and so full of Glory, that it will be the greatest Embellishment of the History of this Age, and the admiration of all that shall succeed it. *Lewis the Great* took *Forty* Cities, and made himself Master of *Maestricht*, after a Siege of Thirteen Days; but what was the fruit of all his Victories, and what did he retain of so many Conquests but an exhausted Kingdom, Peopled with Beggars. Is not this the only instance of a Prince that was Honoured with Triumphal Arches for ruining his own Subjects.

The taking of *Valenciennes*, *Ipres*, and *Cambray*, were Actions that had a juster Title to the proud name of

*Conquests.* The *Empire*, *Spain*, and the *States General* of the *United Provinces* had form'd a Confederacy against the King, and had often alarm'd him with Potent Armies. Let us do justice to the Merit and Experience of the late *Prince*, and of the *Mareschal de Turenne*, who were only able to preserve us in such an Extremity. They alone merited the Honour of Statues and Triumphal Arches, and to have their Names inscrib'd on our Medals. The pretended Glory of *Lewis the Great* is only a reflected Splendor, which he owes to the Valour and Experience of his ill rewarded Generals, and to the Skill and Dexterity of his Two Ministers, one of which made it his business to find out ways to squeeze Money out of miserable Wretches, while the other provided well-stor'd Magazines, that the King's Army might be in a condition to enter upon Action, before that of the Enemies could be drawn out of their Winter-quarters.

It was certainly a very prudent Advice, that of *M. de Turenne*, to keep all things in a readiness for the early opening of the Campaign. And 'twas by a careful observance of this Maxim, that *France* broke the measures of the Confederates, and obtain'd an advantageous Peace. But I maintain that a Prince who aggrandizes himself meerly by such Politicks, does not deserve the name of a Conqueror. The *Alexanders*, *Scipios*, *Pompeys*, and *Casars*, of those celebrated Glories of Antiquity, took other Methods to acquire Honour, than those that are now in fashion among our *Heroes of all Seasons*. This is one of those splendid Titles that the *Sappho* of our Age bestows on the King: And you know this thought was esteem'd very ingenious and fine: Did ever any of those *Summer Heroes* which are plac'd so far beneath the *Heroes of all Seasons*, content themselves with seizing on a Town that could not be reliev'd; did  
ever



ever any of them forsake their Arms, immediatly after such an inglorious Expedition, or Post back to their Mistresses as soon as the Enemies began to appear, and leave the care of engaging with them to others?

Let the Gentlemen of the *French Academy*, rack their mercenary Fancies to embellish their fulsom Panegyricks with new *Hyberboles*; it will be for ever acknowledg'd by those who are willing to do Justice to true Merit, that the Duke of Orleans acquir'd more solid Glory of the Siege of *St. Omer* and the Battel of *Cassel*, than the King by the taking of *Cambray*, *Ipres*, and *Valenciennes*, and ( if you please to add ) *Mons*, and *Namur*. By coming out of his Lines, meeting the Enemy, gaining a Battle, and afterwards taking the Besieg'd Town, he merited far greater Honour, than the King by all that he perform'd before *Mons* and *Namur*. Instead of advancing to meet the Confederate Forces that appear'd towards the end of the Siege of *Mons* which they could not possibly relieve, the King with all his jolly Troop, made haste back to his dear *Versailles*, and arriv'd there with Men and Horses that were as fresh and unfatigu'd as those that had not begun to march. The taking of this important Place was a *Blessing from Heaven* on the Providence of *M. Louvois*, and skill of *M. de Vauban*, rather than on the Valour of the King, or the *Justice of his Arms*. The next Year he took *Namur*, in sight of the Confederate Army, but he was cover'd by an Army greater than theirs, during the Siege of the Castle; which was an advantage that the Duke of Orleans had not at the Siege of *St. Omer*. He was forced to come out of his Lines and Fight the Enemy. An instance that cannot be pararel'd in all the glorious Life of *Lewis the Great*.

Where shall we find a *Homer* to celebrate our new *Achilles*? But we may trust that care to himself; he will

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not suffer future Ages to lose so great an Example ; he has hir'd his *Chronicles* already, and carries them always about with him, that they may be Eye-witnesses of all his Glorious Exploits. But all in vain, our Posterity will easily discover the Truth, and pull off the disguising Vizard of Flattery : And perhaps some Historian may lurk in a Garret that will inform them after what manner *Lewis the Great* took so many Towns, and gain'd all his Victories. And even I am very much afraid, that they will Read the Histories of the King as we Read the Books of those infamous flatterers who prais'd *Tiberius* and *Nero*, and that they will have the same regard to all our *Medals* and *Triumphal Arches* that we have, to those which remain of certain Princes, whose Vanity we mock and despise.

I have not time to send you my Reflexions on the present War, but you may expect them by the next occasion, Adieu.

Paris, Jan. 23  
1695.

FINIS.



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